

SPECIAL SESSION-----ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL

April 23, 2001

7:00 p.m.

The Council of the City of Roanoke met in special session on Monday, April 23, 2001, at 7:00 p.m., in the Roanoke Civic Center Exhibit Hall, 710 Williamson Road, N. E., City of Roanoke, Virginia, with Mayor Ralph K. Smith presiding, pursuant to Section 10, Meetings of Council of the City Charter and pursuant to the budget study schedule for adoption of the City's fiscal year 2001-02 budget which was approved by Council on January 16, 2001.

PRESENT: Council Members William D. Bestpitch, William H. Carder, W. Alvin Hudson, Jr., William White, Sr., Linda F. Wyatt, and Mayor Ralph K. Smith-----6.

ABSENT: Council Member C. Nelson Harris-----1.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager; William M. Hackworth, City Attorney; James D. Grisso, Director of Finance; and Mary F. Parker, City Clerk.

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Council Member William D. Bestpitch.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was led by Mayor Smith.

Pursuant to instructions of Council, the Mayor advised that public hearings were advertised for Monday, April 23, 2001, at 7:00 p.m., on the following matters: HUD proposed budget, proposed City budget, cigarette tax rate, transient occupancy tax rate, changing the structure and rates of septic tank disposal fees, and City water rates and related charges for services, the matters were before the body.

Legal advertisements of the public hearings were placed in The Roanoke Times on April 6, April 16 and April 23, 2001.

(For full text, see legal affidavits on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

In view of the number of speakers who wished to be heard, the Mayor requested that each speaker limit their remarks to no more than three minutes.

HOUSING/AUTHORITY-GRANTS: The Mayor advised that the first public hearing pertained to the HUD Consolidated Plan budget which recommends allocation of \$3.9 million in Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME and ESG funds to support an array of housing, homeless prevention, neighborhood and community development, public services and economic development activities.

The Mayor inquired if there were persons present who would like to address the matter; whereupon, Mr. Robert Gravely, 1412 Moorman Road, N. W., advised that the City's pay scale is unrealistic and does not provide enough money for the average City employee to purchase a vehicle, or buy a home, or purchase insurance. He stated that the City's work force is decreasing and there are not sufficient staff on the payroll to do the work of the City.

No other speakers wishing to be heard, the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

The Mayor advised that the second public hearing pertained to the proposed fiscal year 2001-02 City budget, totaling \$191.3 million; whereupon, the following persons addressed Council:

Mr. David A. Bowers, 601 Camilla Avenue, S. E., addressed Council on behalf of the Passenger Rail Service Committee. He expressed appreciation to the City of Roanoke for designating the old Norfolk Southern Rail Terminal across from The Hotel Roanoke on Shenandoah Avenue as the future site for passenger rail service in the City. With regard to funding, he stated that it was previously recommended that funds come from the proposed 2001-02 budget which is currently under consideration; however, he was now advised that the City Manager has suggested that the funds be included in the City's Capital Improvement Program. He added that members of the Passenger Rail Study Committee concur in the City Manager's suggestion and encouraged Council to keep the request at the forefront. He added that the Committee continues to support the proposal by the City Manager to fund \$1.25 million as the City's share of an \$8 million renovation project to provide a location for the visitor's center, depot and possibly the Winston Link art collection.

Ms. Berniece Meador, 370 Koogler Drive, N. W., spoke on behalf of Fire Station No. 12, the Ridgewood Farms Neighborhood League, and residents of the area. She

advised that residents in the area of Fire Station #12 want to keep the station open and operational which will continue to provide good response time for residents in an emergency situation. She asked that Council give serious consideration to the proposal of the City Manager before taking action.

Ms. Nancy Harper, 1828 Glenroy Street, N. W., Member, Board of Directors, Harrison Museum of African-American Culture, expressed appreciation to the Cultural Services Committee for its tentative allocation of \$22,479.00 for program year 2001-02, and on behalf of the Board of Directors, she requested an increase in the allocation since it falls short of the \$97,078.00 requested. She advised that the Board of Directors and staff of the Harrison Museum have worked diligently to provide quality programming for the community, to obtain the necessary funding for a top notch Museum with ample funding for educational services for all persons while preserving and promoting the achievements of African-Americans, and funding from the City of Roanoke provides a significant role in providing these services and in achieving the mission of the Harrison Museum. She stated that officials and members of the Board of Directors met with the City Manager to discuss concerns and needs of the Museum, as well as needs and concerns of the City of Roanoke and as a result of those meetings and correspondence, the Board of Directors and staff responded in a timely manner to several administrative requests of the City Manager, which response documented the Museum's commitment to both fiscal accountability and sound management. She explained that it was the Board's understanding that the request for additional funds for the current year would be granted once administrative requests were satisfied; however, regrettably, additional funding from the City of Roanoke has not materialized, even though all requests for documentation were honored. She advised that the goal of the Board of Directors of the Harrison Museum is to become more self-sufficient, a staff person trained to concentrate on development and fund raising is needed to secure adequate funding in order for the Harrison Museum to become self-sufficient and the tentative allocation of \$22,479.00 is not sufficient to employ a development officer. She stated that the Harrison Board is composed of volunteers who spend many hours augmenting the work of the Executive Director; however, volunteers are no substitute for an experienced professional development fund raiser. Therefore, she requested that Council grant the request of the Harrison Museum of African-American Culture, in the amount of \$97,078.00 for fiscal year 2001-02.

Thomas Brown, representing the American Red Cross, Roanoke Chapter, advised that throughout the years, the Red Cross has had an ongoing working relationship with the City of Roanoke in administering disaster services. He called

attention to joint efforts to establish a disaster plan at the Roanoke Regional Airport in the event of an air emergency, the Roanoke Chapter worked with the Federal Emergency Management Association in setting up disaster education and mitigation programs in the City of Roanoke, the Red Cross operated a cost free Learn to Swim Program for the City that taught over 300 children how to swim, and the Red Cross trained all City lifeguards and conducted numerous educational programs in the City schools at no cost. He stated that the Red Cross has never approached the City or the School Board for funds; however, because the partnership with the United Way of the Roanoke Valley has been discontinued, the budget of the Roanoke Chapter has been decreased by \$159,000.00; therefor, \$50,000.00 is requested of the City of Roanoke to cover direct service support provided by the Roanoke Chapter to victims of disaster in the Roanoke area.

Tanya Williams, representing the American Red Cross, Roanoke Chapter, called attention to assistance rendered by the Roanoke Chapter to the victims of fire, such as the Third Street apartment fire in which the organization assisted 11 families with miscellaneous living expenses, and the fire at the Summit Apartments which displaced nine persons and the Roanoke Chapter provided medical needs, food, clothing and basic household needs.

Karen Wilson, Disaster Chairperson, Roanoke Chapter, American Red Cross, advised that the Roanoke Chapter has trained over 50 volunteers to manage different types of disasters, and assist with food, household needs and rental assistance when disasters occur. She stated that when injuries occur, the Red Cross provides medical assistance, medicine and emotional support, and when there is loss of life of a family member and the family cannot afford funeral expenses, the Red Cross provides the necessary services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chuck Wells, 1115 Patterson Avenue, S. W., spoke on behalf of the Roanoke Fire Fighters Association. He advised that according to the City Manager, there is a need for budget cuts, but Roanoke's fire fighters believe that when it comes to public safety, the citizens and businesses of Roanoke City deserve only the best, and instead of cutting the number of fire fighters and para-medics, the City should increase the staffing level. He stated that there is ample documentation and studies which show that adding just one additional fire fighter and fire apparatus can increase the City's efficiency rating from 38 per cent to 65 per cent, and with increased staffing also comes an additional benefit in decreased insurance rates paid by citizens and businesses. He added that there are other means available to reduce the cost of fire protection that have not been considered such as proper preventative maintenance on fire stations, and other suggestions that the Firefighters Association is prepared to discuss with the City Manager. He stated that in considering a reduction in staffing for fire service, studies have shown that with reductions there

are increases in property damage, personal injury, and death to both citizens and firefighters. He request that fire fighters be provided with the means to perform their job safely and effectively.

Mr. Craig Sellers, 3615 Manassas Drive, a 19 year City fire fighter, spoke with regard to a reduction in the City's overall work force, and referred to a list which was prepared by the E-911 Control Center listing streets that are closed, traffic control lights and hydrants that are out of service, and 12 opticom units that are not operational, some of which have been out of service for several years. He advised that 26 fire hydrants are out of service, many of which have been non operational for several years and have not been repaired due to a shortage of City employees.

Ms. Robin Murphy-Kelso, 4449 Summit Drive, N. W., spoke on behalf of keeping Fire Station No. 12 open. She advised that when the area was annexed, residents were assured that they would have a fire station in the area, increased water pressure, and adequate fire hydrants; however, water pressure is still an issue and drainage problems are being addressed in three phases. She stated that removing fire equipment for replacement by a medic unit should not be an option, residents were promised a fire station, and they were assured that before any decisions are made, they would be briefed by City officials, however, to date, there has been no contact by City representatives. She requested that Council honor the wishes of the citizens served by Fire Station No. 12.

Ms. Brenda Hamilton, 4505 Biltmore Drive, N. W., a City employee, expressed concern with regard to the proposed pay increase of 3.5 per cent for City employees. She inquired if the pay increase will be based on the maximum of the grade range or on the mid point range. She requested that Council give consideration to providing all City employees with a pay increase based on the maximum of the range rather than the mid point.

Ms. Annette Lewis, Director, Total Action Against Poverty This Valley Works Program, advised that TAP would like to thank the City of Roanoke for its financial support. She further advised that during the past year, as a result of the City's financial support, 115 low income citizens received crisis assistance, 129 youth and adults received remediation literacy instruction, English As A Second Language and GED instruction, 29 students received general office skills, 43 residents received training and development in small businesses, 48 homeless persons received 60 days of supportive services, 144 homeless persons received long term shelter, case management, counseling and life skills training, 56 homeless persons obtained permanent housing, 255 ex offenders were assessed for emergency housing and employment needs and 167 were provided with employment and career counseling, 152 ex offenders were provided with transportation assistance to interviews, medical

appointments, etc., 202 women received crisis intervention assistance and 329 children were represented in the 202 families, and 87 single adults received housing through TAP's single room occupancy project. She stated that the above listed measurements provide a brief overview of the effect of Roanoke City's funding support on the lives of those who have not been as fortunate as others. She encouraged the City to continue its financial support to Total Action Against Poverty.

Stark Jones, representing the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce Community Public Development Initiative, expressed appreciation to the City Manager for implementing an improved budget review for the grant process. He expressed appreciation to Council for its support of the Community Development Business Initiative.

No other persons wishing to be heard, without objection by Council, the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

The Mayor advised that the third public hearing pertained to a proposed increase in the cigarette tax rate which is recommended to increase from \$.17 to \$.27 per pack, to provide additional funds for needed curb, gutter and sidewalk improvements, effective July 1, 2001.

The Mayor advised that no persons had signed up to speak on the issue; therefore, without objection by Council, he declared the public hearing closed.

The Mayor stated that the fourth public hearing pertained to the transient occupancy tax and the City Manager is recommending an increase from six per cent to seven per cent to provide expanded funding to more effectively market the City of Roanoke. He advised that the following persons would like to address the matter:

Matthew R. Kennell, President-Elect, Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, spoke in support of the proposed increase in the transient occupancy tax rate and expressed appreciation to Council for recognizing tourism as a major revenue generator for the City of Roanoke. He stated that in fiscal year 2000-01, the lodging tax increased over 14.5 per cent over the previous fiscal year and in the first six months of fiscal year 2001-02, the lodging tax increase was 8.7 per cent which is new money and, when combined with existing funding, will allow the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to increase its marketing efforts estimated between \$280,000.00 and \$300,000.00 per year. He asked that the program be an ongoing commitment by the City of Roanoke and not limited to fiscal year 2001-02. He stated that current local funding challenges, a slowing economy, and rising energy and gasoline prices will have a negative impact on the number of visitors to the Roanoke Valley, therefore,

it is critical that the Convention and Visitors Bureau establish a strong marketing presence.

Ms. Brenda Phillips, representing the Wyndam Roanoke Airport Hotel, 2801 Hersherberger Road, N. W., advised that the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau is a vital link to the tourism industry of the Roanoke Valley, and the Wyndam Hotel supports the one per cent increase in the transient occupancy tax if the proceeds go to the Convention and Visitors Bureau to help increase sales and marketing initiatives in the Roanoke Valley.

No other persons wishing to address the matter, without objection by Council, the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

The Mayor advised that the last public hearing pertains to changing the structure and rates of septic tank disposal fees and City water rates and related charges for services which will result in decreases and increases in certain rates and related charges, as follows: increases in septic tank disposal fees of up to 110 per cent; (2) decreases in certain minimum charges for water services of up to 95 per cent; (3) increases of certain water rates of up to ten per cent; and (4) elimination of the monthly minimum 200 cubic foot allowance for water consumption on and after August 1, 2001.

The Mayor inquired if there were persons present who would like to speak to the issue; whereupon, Gary Phillips, 1715 Murray Road, S. W., representing Tidy Services, endorsed the 110 per cent increase in septic tank disposal fees because the industry is growing and needs to be regulated. He stated that when problems occur, the City should inspect the situation to insure that the service is administered properly.

No other persons wishing to be heard, without objection by Council, the Mayor advised that the public hearing would be closed.

The Mayor noted that Council will convene in fiscal year 2001-02 budget study sessions on Wednesday, April 25, 2001 at 8:00 a.m., and Thursday, April 26, 2001 at 8:30 a.m., in the Emergency Operations Center Conference Room, with the goal of referring the proposed budget back to the City Manager for any necessary adjustments and preparation of the appropriate measures for adoption by Council on Monday, May 7, 2001, at the 2:00 p.m. session.

HOUSING/AUTHORITY: The City Manager submitted a communication advising that Resolution No. 34969-071700 adopted by Council on July 17, 2000, authorized City officials to execute the Shenandoah Crossing Cooperation and Parking

Agreement between the City and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority; through this project, the Housing Authority will convert the former Norfolk and Western GOB South into market rate apartments; a budget ordinance adopted by Council at the same meeting provided funding of \$1.2 million to the Housing Authority to assist in financing of the renovation and conversion; and other sources of funding for the project include syndication proceeds and mortgage funds insured by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

It was further advised that to more properly formalize arrangements for the financing of the entire Shenandoah Crossing Project, HUD has advised the City to execute an agreement which appropriately involves all parties to the project, including the City, the Housing Authority, Shenandoah Crossings, LP, Highland Mortgage Company, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The City Manager recommended that Council adopt a resolution authorizing execution of a five-party agreement.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Mr. Carder offered the following resolution:

(#35296-042301) A RESOLUTION authorizing execution of an Agreement among the City of Roanoke, the City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (Authority), Highland Mortgage Company (Highland), Shenandoah Crossings, L.P., (Borrower), and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide for implementation of certain aspects of the Redevelopment Plan for the Gainsboro Community Program Area, specifically regarding the conversion of the former Norfolk and Western GOB South into market rate apartments, such Agreement to provide assistance in securing financing and effectuating the project.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 64)

Mr. Carder moved the adoption of Resolution No. 35296-042301. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bestpitch and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members Bestpitch, Carder, Hudson, White, Wyatt and Mayor Smith-----6.

NAYS: None-----0.
(Council Member Harris was absent.)

COUNCIL: Mr. Bestpitch offered the following resolution changing the time of commencement of the regular meeting of Council scheduled to be held at 2:00 p.m., on Monday, May 7, 2001, to 3:15 p.m., on that date:

(#35297-042301) A RESOLUTION changing the time of commencement of the regular meeting of City Council scheduled to be held at 2:00 p.m., on Monday, May 7, 2001.

Mr. Bestpitch moved the adoption of Resolution No. 35297-042301. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carder and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members Bestpitch, Carder, Hudson, White, Wyatt and Mayor Smith-----6.

NAYS: None-----0.

(Council Member Harris was absent.)

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the special meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

A P P R O V E D

ATTEST:

Mary F. Parker
City Clerk

Ralph K. Smith
Mayor

SPECIAL SESSION-----ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL

April 23, 2001

**Immediately Following the Public Hearing on the
2001-02 Fiscal Year Budget Which Convened at 7:00 p.m. (8:07 p.m.)**

The Council of the City of Roanoke met in special session on Monday, April 23, 2001, immediately following the public hearing on the proposed fiscal year 2001-02 budget which convened at 7:00 p.m., in the Roanoke Civic Center Exhibit Hall, 710 Williamson Road, N. E., City of Roanoke, Virginia, with Mayor Ralph K. Smith presiding, pursuant to Section 10, Meetings of Council of the City Charter and pursuant to the budget study schedule for adoption of the City's fiscal year 201-02 budget which was approved by Council on January 16, 2001.

PRESENT: Council Members William D. Bestpitch, William H. Carder, W. Alvin Hudson, Jr., William White, Sr., Linda F. Wyatt, and Mayor Ralph K. Smith-----6.

ABSENT: Council Member C. Nelson Harris-----1.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager; William M. Hackworth, City Attorney; James D. Grisso, Director of Finance; and Mary F. Parker, City Clerk.

BUDGET-TAXES: The Mayor advised that the purpose of the special meeting was to consider the City's proposed real property tax rate for fiscal year 2001-02. He further advised that the City Manager's proposed budget includes a real property tax rate of \$1.21 per \$100.00 of assessed value which is the current tax rate.

Legal advertisement of the public hearing was published in The Roanoke Times on April 16, 2001.

(For full text, see publisher's affidavit on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

The Mayor inquired if there were citizens who would like to address Council with regard to the matter; whereupon, no persons asked to be heard.

Without objection by Council, the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the special meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

A P P R O V E D

ATTEST:

**Mary F. Parker
City Clerk**

**Ralph K. Smith
Mayor**
